

Alzheimer's and Other Dementias

January, 2012

WHAT IS ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE?

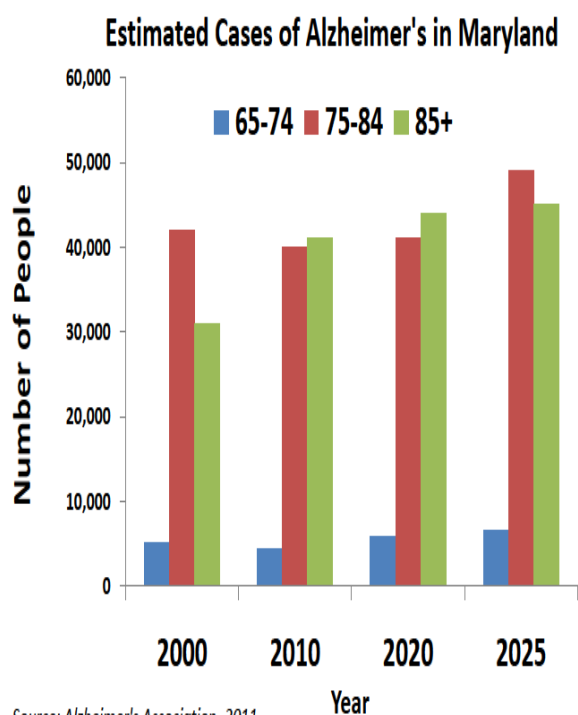
Dementia is a general term for the loss of memory and other mental abilities that interfere with daily life. It is caused by physical changes in the brain. Alzheimer's is the most common form of dementia that causes memory loss and affects thinking and behavior. The disease accounts for 50 to 80 percent of dementia cases.

Alzheimer's worsens over time

The disease is progressive and symptoms develop gradually and worsen over time. In the early stages of the disease, memory loss is mild. In the later stages of Alzheimer's individuals lose the ability to participate in conversation and respond to their environment. Alzheimer's is the sixth leading cause of death in the United States.

No cure but treatment options are available

There is currently no cure for Alzheimer's disease. Treatment cannot stop the disease from progressing but it temporarily slows the onset of symptoms and improves the quality of life.



WHAT ARE RISK FACTORS?

AGE

Advancing age is the greatest known risk factor for Alzheimer's. Most individuals diagnosed with the disease are age 65 or older. The likelihood of developing Alzheimer's doubles at age 70, and increases to almost 50% after age 85.

FAMILY HISTORY

Individuals with a brother, sister, or parent with Alzheimer's are more likely to develop the disease. The risk of being diagnosed with Alzheimer's increases if more than one family member has the disease.

GENETICS

There are two types of genes that play a role in whether an individual develops a disease. Risk genes increase the likelihood of disease and deterministic genes directly cause a disease. Alzheimer's genes have been found in both categories.

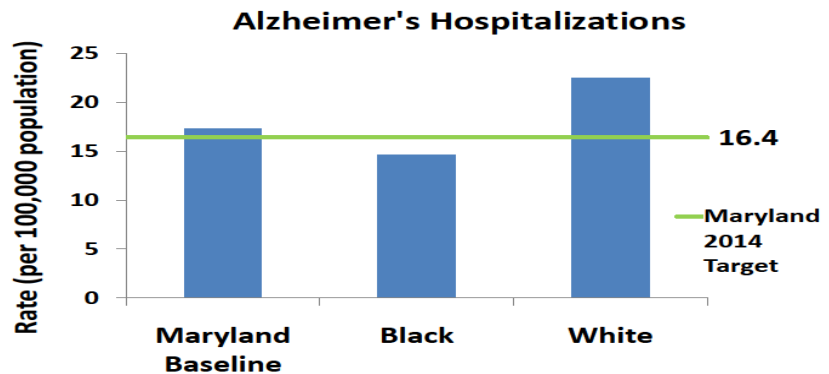
10 Warning Signs of Alzheimer's

1. Memory Loss that Disrupts Daily Life
2. Challenges in Planning or Solving Problems
3. Difficulty Completing Familiar Tasks
4. Confusion with Time or Place
5. Trouble Understanding Visual Images and Spatial Relationships
6. New Problems with Writing or Speaking Words
7. Misplacing Things and Losing the Ability to Retrace Steps
8. Decreased or Poor Judgment
9. Withdrawal from Work or Social Activities
10. Changes in Mood and Personality

Number of Deaths in Maryland Due to Alzheimer's Disease (Alzheimer's Association, 2007)

881

ALZHEIMER'S IN MARYLAND



Source: Maryland Health Services Cost Review Commission, 2010

WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW

Diet

Recommended diets include a variation of fruits and green leafy vegetables high in antioxidants. It should include foods that contain omega-3 fatty acids like fish, nuts and seeds. Also consume whole grains and legumes for a balanced diet.

Exercise

Regular exercise reduces the risk of developing cardiovascular diseases which have been linked to an increased risk of Alzheimer's disease. Exercise also improves mental fitness by releasing stress.

Practice Heart Health

The brain is nourished by blood vessels from the heart. The risk of developing Alzheimer's is increased by health conditions that damage the heart.

Be Safe

There may be a link between head trauma and risk of Alzheimer's disease. Protect your brain by wearing a helmet while playing sports, buckling your seatbelt, and fall proofing your home.

Keep Your Mind Active

Research suggests that staying mentally active may help to preserve cognitive functioning. Reading challenging books, learning a musical instrument, studying a new language will build cognitive reserves and may slow symptoms of dementia.

SHIP RESOURCES

Alzheimer's Association <http://www.alz.org/>

Alzheimer's Association, Greater Maryland Chapter <http://www.alz.org/maryland/>

Alzheimer's Foundation of America <http://www.alzfdn.org/>

American Health Assistance Foundation, Alzheimer's Disease Research <http://www.ahaf.org/alzheimers/>

DHMH, State Health Improvement Process <http://dhmh.maryland.gov/ship/vision/vision5/obj35.html>

Maryland Attorney General, Policy Study on Alzheimer's Disease Care <http://www.oag.state.md.us/healthpol/alzheimers.htm>